

Divine Guidance

by Walter Beuttler

Knowing God's will and receiving divine guidance requires dependence on God, unselfishness, trust in God, sincerity of heart, patience, and a willingness to wait for the Lord.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 28:65

Topics: "Divine Guidance", "Holy Spirit"

Description

Walter Beuttler preaches on the importance of seeking guidance from the Lord, emphasizing the consequences of disobedience and the conditions for receiving unconditional and conditional guidance. He highlights the need for unselfishness, trust, sincerity of heart, and patience in order to be led by God. Beuttler explains the various forms of guidance, including through the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, divine providence, and the peace of God, cautioning against mistaking favorable or unfavorable circumstances as indicators of being in or out of God's will.

Transcript

"O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walks to direct his steps."
Jeremiah 10:23

Jeremiah knew the Lord, yet felt utterly dependent upon Him. The Lord's approval is with those who are dependent upon Him, who seek counsel from the mouth of the Lord. Because of one act of disobedience, the human race fell, and that one act of disobedience cost the Son of God His life. Some of the consequences of being out of the will of God are seen, when Israel continued in her disobedience to God.

"And among these nations shall you find no ease, neither shall the sole of your foot have rest: but the Lord shall give you there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind." Deuteronomy 28:65

These are conditions, which are symptomatic of being out of the will of God: uneasiness, restlessness, uncertainty, fearfulness, lack of assurance, discontent, and spiritual bondage. There are others, but these indicate that something is out of alignment in our relationship with the Lord. When these conditions are present, it would be well to consider our having missed the will and purpose of the Lord.

Knowing the "mind of God" in matters that pertain to our lives is very important. Guidance can be divided into two distinct categories - "Unconditional" and "Conditional" guidance.

Unconditional guidance is God guiding in sovereign grace, independent of anything we do, or do not do. Notice the passage in Isaiah 45:1-3 about Cyrus the Great. God said:

"I will... open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut... And I will give you the treasures of darkness... that you may know that I, the Lord, which call you by your name, am the God of Israel."

Cyrus the Great was an idolater who did not know the God of Israel, yet the Lord chose Cyrus and called this heathen king "His anointed." Here is divine guidance exercised in sovereignty. The city of Babylon was an impregnable city. There was no power on earth at that time that could take Babylon, but God gave Cyrus a dream in which He revealed how to take the city. God guided Cyrus unconditionally in order to accomplish His purposes.

Many of us could testify that the Lord had been guiding us unconditionally, before we were saved. However, there are conditions that must be met in order to enjoy what we might call the "guided life." There are times when we need wisdom and direction from the Lord, and He has promised to grant such help.

"And if you draw out of your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall your light rise in obscurity, and your darkness be as the noon day: And the Lord shall guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and make fat your bones: and you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." Isaiah 58:10-11

One condition for this guidance is "unselfishness." When we are selfish, we incur the disfavor of God, for selfishness is the very opposite of the love of God. The love of God is a love that gives. The more we love the Lord, the more unselfish we will be toward our fellow beings. If we want to enjoy the continuous leading of God in a "guided life," we should have a burden and concern for others.

Another condition for guidance is for us to "trust in God."

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your path." Proverbs 3:5-6

We cannot foresee the future. Therefore, we should prayerfully make our decisions, giving God the opportunity to redirect us, because only He knows what is ahead. We must maintain a position in which we can say, "To the best of my knowledge, I am moving in the ways and will of the Lord, and I desire His correction." With this attitude, God has promised that He will give us direction. We should not hurry the Lord, because sometimes He takes us only one step at a time.

"Sincerity of heart" is another factor. Jeremiah 42:20 reveals a condition for guidance:

"For you dissembled in your hearts, when you sent me to the Lord your God, saying, Pray for us according to all that the Lord our God shall say, so declare it to us, and we will do it."

"Dissembling in your hearts," is making a false pretense in intention. They had already determined that if God told them to not go to Egypt, they would go anyway. They did, and carried the prophet Jeremiah with them. We cannot expect God to guide us unless we are sincere, and willing to obey His Word.

Another condition for guidance is "patience" - our being willing to wait for the Lord. Sometimes God is silent because we already know His will, yet ask God again, thinking that He might change His mind. God may change His mind, and let us have our own way, but remember what is written:

"He gave them (the children of Israel) their requests (the desires of their heart), but sent leanness into their souls." Psalm 106:15

When God has not spoken, it is better to wait, than to move on our own. We should abide in the circumstance and place to which we are called, until the Lord speaks differently. Sometimes the Lord waits to see whether we really desire His will, or whether we are bent on having our own way, with or without His guidance. Do not take the silence of God to be equivalent to consent.

There is a distinction between instruction and teaching:

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go...." Psalm 32:8

Instruction reveals the principles of "divine guidance." Teaching helps us to receive and move in "divine guidance." The Lord may teach us to discern His will through our circumstances or problems. Therefore, we must understand the principals of guidance. The Lord has promised to guide us, even when we are not aware of our need for guidance.

"...I will guide you with My eye." Psalm 32:8

This is guidance by intimation. There is a principle that the further away we are, the louder the Lord has to speak.

"Be you not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near to you." Psalm 32:9

If we desire guidance, we must be pliable.

"The meek will He guide in judgment; and the meek will He teach His way" Psalm 25:9

This "meekness" is a pliability that enables the Lord to guide us gently, rather than by the force of circumstances. Guidance can come through the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, or by divine providence. The Lord, in His wisdom, has given us these three "clocks," so if we are in any difficult situation, if the Word, the Spirit, and divine providence agree as one, we have a three-fold factor of safety, and we then can be reasonably sure that we are hearing from the Lord.

David said:

"Your Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path." Psalm 119:105

David had shortcomings, but he had an abiding respect for the Word of God. David regarded the precepts of the Word of God as a "lamp to his feet" (the next step) and a "light for his pathway" (the general direction in which he was to go).

Another form of guidance relates to personal integrity.

"The integrity of the upright shall guide them...." Proverbs 11:3

There is guidance by integrity (standards of righteousness) that we receive from the written Word of God. The Lord would have us to be guided by principles of integrity where we do what is right, even though we could evade it. The Word of God establishes standards of right and wrong, and the Lord expects us to adhere to these standards without special revelation. We do not need a revelation to discover that we are obligated to obey the Word.

During a time of distress, we may have opened the Bible and saw a verse that ministered to our need. But if we begin to do this on a regular basis as a method of ascertaining the will of God, sooner or later, we will discover that we are mistaken. There is a difference between an occasional exceptional intervention of divine providence, and deducing an infallible system from that.

There are those who (seemingly) receive a special revelation, which either modifies, or supersedes the Word of God. The Spirit of God will never give any revelation, which in any way takes from, adds to, or modifies the written Word of God. Let us be like Paul who said even though an angel should say anything to the contrary, let him be accursed. The Spirit of God will never violate the Word of God. The Word of God stands preeminent as an infallible means of guidance, when rightly understood.

"Then the Spirit says to Philip, Go near, and join yourself to this chariot." Acts 8:29

A Scripture was not being quoted when Philip was told to "Go join yourself to this chariot." The Spirit of God speaks in many different ways: He may speak within our spirit or consciousness, or an imparted thought, song, or some familiar circumstance.

Another aspect of guidance is the restraint of the Spirit of God.

For instance, when Paul sought to go into Asia, he was forbidden by the Holy Spirit. And when he wanted to go into Bithynia, the "Spirit suffered them not," or did not permit them. The Spirit restrains, or confirms through our being "checked," or by the witness of His peace.

There is a differentiation between peace "with" God, and the peace "of" God. Peace with God has to do with our "relationship" with God. The peace of God has to do with our "walk." Peace "with" God comes first, whereby the enmity between us and God is removed. The peace "of" God should follow after, but not all Christians who have peace "with" God, also have the peace "of" God.

The peace of God comes through our walking in the Spirit, and is a state of tranquility and rest produced in our hearts by the Spirit. It is a supernatural peace that passes all understanding. It keeps us at rest in the midst of conflict and difficulty, and enables us to say, "Praise the Lord."

"Let the peace of God rule in your hearts." Colossians 3:15

This word "rule" literally means, "arbitrate." We must first have peace, or it cannot arbitrate. An arbitrator is someone who mediates between two parties, making a decision that both must accept. The Spirit of God is an arbitrator. The Word of God is not sufficient to help us make every decision - we must also have the peace of God.

The peace of God is one of the forms of guidance, "restraining" us by an inner unrest, uncertainty, or "confirming" a certain course of action by a witness, satisfaction, or a deep inner rest. The peace of God can be described negatively, positively, experientially, positionally and judicially. It is not a mere absence of disturbance, but a conscious rest, which is independent of circumstances, favorable or unfavorable.

Unfavorable circumstances do not necessarily constitute evidence of being out of the will of God. In Mark 4:35-38, Jesus said to His disciples, "Let us pass over to the other side." A storm arose with contrary winds, yet they were in the center of the will of God. If we think that troubled circumstances constitute evidence of being out of His will, then that might result in our moving out from His will.

Sometimes we get into trouble, not because we disobeyed, but because we obeyed. There was an occasion when the disciples were in trouble, in the Lord's will. When Jesus came to them, walking on the sea, Peter said, "Lord, if it be You, bid me come to You on the water. And Jesus said, come" (Matthew 14:27-28). Peter was not primarily walking on the water, he walked on the "Word" that Jesus had spoken, "Come." When Peter looked at the water, he began to sink.

Sometimes the Lord causes us to walk on troubled waters to teach us to walk on His Word.

Reversibly, in the case of Jonah, just because everything worked out circumstantially was not proof that he was in the will of God. Jonah fled from the presence of the Lord and went down to the harbor. Just as he arrived, a ship was ready to sail, and Jonah had the fare.

Here are favorable circumstances from which Jonah could have deduced that he was in the will of God, but of course, he knew better. Unfavorable circumstances do not necessarily constitute evidence of being out of the will of God; but neither do they evidence that we are in the will of God. Do not let circumstances in themselves determine your course of action. Be sure you have the witness of the peace of God, so that you know the circumstance is of God.

Jesus taught in principle, "My sheep know My voice" (John 10). Many have often said, "But how do I know it is the voice of the Spirit?" One of the best ways to learn the recognition of His voice is through these sheep. They had learned to recognize His voice through continued association.

If you are interested in the recognition of His voice, see to it that you live and walk in close association with Him.

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